

Mr. KLECZKA. Reserving the right to object, Mr. Speaker, I have an inquiry of the Chair. Is the Chair prepared to allot some time for this side of the aisle to be heard on this issue?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain requests, and it depends on what the request is.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for up to 15 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Dakota?

There was no objection.

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the Chaplain's resignation is accepted, with regret.

There was no objection.

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CONCERNING THE CHAPLAIN SELECTION PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) for 15 minutes.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for allowing us to express our thoughts on this important matter. I would begin my thoughts by joining the Speaker's expression of regret about the resignation of Dr. Ford, who has served this institution so well and been a dear friend and an important chaplain to each of us. I thought that at some point, I might, as cochair of the chaplain selection process, have the opportunity to address the body as to the version, our version in the minority, of the events that have transpired throughout this chaplain selection process. I did not anticipate it coming today, in the middle of the budget vote; and I did not anticipate following the Speaker of the House, a person for whom I have considerable regard relative to his obviously heartfelt remarks just delivered. My remarks are not prepared. I ask you to bear with me.

I want to convey a deep sense of sorrow and regret that a process that began so honorably by the Speaker has ended in this fashion. Clearly, Speaker HASTERT wanted to capture the bipartisan efforts of other Speakers as the chaplain was selected but improve upon it. So when Speaker O'Neill asked the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations and the ranking member of the Committee on Appropriations to go and agree on a chaplain that he might then appoint, that was bipartisan. It could have been improved upon and Speaker HASTERT set upon a process that did improve upon it. It had even broader involvement, eight minority, eight majority. We were even given a cochair opportunity. We were very, very pleased and heartened by this gesture by the Speaker, because we believe that the chaplain is the chaplain of the House, not the Speaker's chaplain, not the majority chaplain, but the chaplain for all of us.

We advanced with the work, and it was considerable. Thirty-eight resumes to pore through. We culled it down in a process that had more comity and agreement across the party aisle to 17 interviews. Going through the hours of interviews, we developed friendships across party aisles, members of the committee. I so enjoyed working with my cochair, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY), and each of the members, majority and minority alike.

□ 1630

We then got it down to six semifinalists working toward the list of three. And while the Speaker is absolutely correct, his letter to us says send up to three names, the discussion throughout was to send three names. And we did not seriously consider sending less than three names.

As the final balloting occurred, even though this had been a process utterly without partisanship, there were, and it is not surprising, party distinctions in the relative support behind the candidates.

The candidate that finished fourth had only Democrat support. The candidate that finished third, Dr. Wright, had Republican support, with 1½ Democrat votes and a token showing across the party aisle. Two candidates, Dr. Dvorak and Father O'Brien, had significant bipartisan support, with Father O'Brien having the first showing in terms of vote totals.

We did not rank these candidates. We decided not to rank them. Ranking involves making a judgment, who is the best one, who is the second best one. We thought all three were qualified individuals, but what was important was the bipartisan consensus behind them.

Again, this is the chaplain of the House. It was a bipartisan process; and, therefore, the degree of consensus behind the final three is very important to us in the selection process, because this determines really the candidates that were able to capture support across the party aisle.

In this respect, in my presentation to the Speaker, the Minority Leader, as they began their work of the final committee of three, I indicated that Father O'Brien had had the most support; that Dr. Dvorak had the second level of support; that Dr. Wright had the third level of support.

I believed that the discussions that followed also captured this sense of consensus behind O'Brien, consensus behind Dvorak, not consensus behind Wright. So there were two meetings, as the Speaker just indicated, largely because they did not come to closure the first time. And the second time, in a divided vote, we in the minority know how divided votes go, you lose them. And the selection was made, Dr. Wright; not a consensus selection.

Here is where I really hope you can understand where our hard feelings on this matter arise. We are asked to participate. We willingly participated. We cared a great deal about the chap-

laincy, and we felt as though our view was ignored when the final decision was made. Majority only, once again. We felt that. We believed that.

You may disagree with that interpretation, but that is what we believed. Others had another feeling as well, and that is that in the passing over of the top candidate, a Roman Catholic priest, there had to be some other motives that were at issue that were untoward. Frankly, I did not have that view.

I felt that the problem was ignoring the bipartisan consensus for the candidate, that it did not have bipartisan consensus. We did not ask Dr. Wright to our caucus because Dr. Wright was not the issue for us. The process was the issue. The process was the problem.

In reacting to how the Speaker has resolved this matter, we look forward to getting to know Father Coughlin, if I have the name right. He is an individual we have not met. I think we can do better than this going forward.

I would ask each of us to seriously consider a resolution that will be offered this week by the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLEY) that would call for the selection of the chaplain to be much in the same way as the selection of Inspector General.

At the end of the process, two votes, two for the majority, two for the minority. This is the chaplain of the House. This individual will be our minister. This individual will be our counselor. This individual will be our friend, not just the Speaker, not just the majority, but all of us.

And so next time, we will never let this happen again, next time. I would ask that we pass this resolution, changing the rules by which we deal with the chaplain and so that both sides have equal say.

Perhaps my deepest regret from this is, I felt a lot of good could come from the institution of the chaplain. I still have that hope for the institution and would only echo the Speaker's comments relative to the chaplain and what the chaplain might mean to this institution.

I look forward to working collectively under the newly announced chaplain and with the chaplains to come in the future, should I still be a Member of this body. I do think it might be one institution that can play an important role in restoring a greater degree of civility and trust between us.

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. POMEROY. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I would like to say a few things in regard to what the Speaker said. First, nothing in anyone's mind today is anything but concern for Dr. Wright. I am sorry that it has come to this. And I would hope that we would welcome the new Chaplain that has been appointed by the Speaker and try our level best

to make his service in this Congress as positive as it possibly can be. I am very sorry that we have come to this point.

I tried in what we did in our committee with Majority Leader ARMEY and Speaker HASTERT to come to a bipartisan agreement on who the Chaplain would be. I had concerns when the process was announced that it would be maybe difficult to get to a bipartisan selection, but I hoped we could do that.

We have a different view of the facts of what happened in the meetings, but that is not important. When we finally got to the point where there was not complete agreement between all three of us, I asked to come back to the bipartisan committee so that both the Speaker and Dr. Wright knew exactly the feelings of the members of our committee. And I tried in the best way that I could to get those feelings across.

I have never said and never believed that there was bias of any kind in the making of this selection. And I have never said that.

I do believe that in the future, as the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) has just said, we can find a process that will ensure bipartisanship in the selection of this important office. I will certainly work toward that end.

I respect the Speaker's choice, and for my part and our part we will do everything in our power to welcome this new Chaplain and to make his service here a positive force for every Member of this body.

The SPEAKER. For what purpose does the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA) rise?

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, since I was the one who asked Father Tim O'Brien to seek the chaplaincy, I would ask the courtesy of 2 or 3 minutes to make a few comments.

The SPEAKER. We will give the gentleman the courtesy of 2 to 3 minutes, but first let us have the courtesy of swearing in the Chaplain.

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APPOINTMENT AS CHAPLAIN OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to 2 U.S. Code, 75a-1, the Chair appoints Father Daniel Coughlin of Illinois to act as and to exercise temporarily the duties of Chaplain of the House of Representatives.

Will Father Coughlin please come forward and take the oath of office.

Father Daniel Coughlin appeared at the bar of the House and took the oath of office, as follows:

Do you solemnly swear that you will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that you will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that you will take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; that you will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which you are about to enter. So help you God.

□ 1645

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Before we return to the Committee of the Whole, the Chair intends to recognize the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA) for 5 minutes and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY) for 5 minutes.

Without objection, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

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COMMENTS ON FATHER TIM O'BRIEN

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I join with all of you in welcoming our new Chaplain, Father Coughlin, to the House of Representatives.

What I would like to do is spend a few moments not reopening the wounds of this, what I would term a sorry chapter in the House of Representatives, but I take the floor today to defend a family friend, a person who I asked to think about running for the post of Chaplain of the House of Representatives, Father Tim O'Brien, who I have known for over 30 years.

Father Tim O'Brien comes from the State of Wisconsin, born on a family dairy farm in Eden, Wisconsin. His ordination was from St. Francis Seminary in my district in Milwaukee. He was an associate pastor in a parish in my district. He went on to complete his education and received a doctorate, and he is a professor at Marquette University.

Because of his love of politics and this House and teaching young minds, he started on his own the Les Aspin Institute named after our former colleague Les Aspin. His intention in starting this program was to bring students from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, here to Washington, DC, to work in our offices, to work for the agencies, to possibly work for some lobby firms, to get a hands-on feel for what the government is all about, so when they graduate and start their livelihood, in no matter what job it might be, they will understand what goes on here, and hopefully they will be a better citizen, hopefully they will be a better voter, or a voter, and possibly they might run for office.

Mr. Speaker, one of those interns who was in my office who has graduated from Marquette was the first Hispanic elected to the State legislature in Wisconsin who hales from my district. So I think the program is working.

So I said to Father O'Brien, "Because of your love of the institution and government, consider becoming our Chaplain," and he did. He put his nomination and his application in, and in every step of the process he came out on top.

Oh, I tracked this process like a hawk. I talked to every member of that

screening committee. How did Father O'Brien do? And you know what I heard repeatedly, time after time? Home run. A triple. Best of the lot. And, in the final analysis, he was the top pick of the committee.

Now, was that related to the leaders who made the choice of someone other than him? Yes. The gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) admitted that even though the formal paper did not have the ranking, he verbalized it, and so did the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY). So to say that we did not know who was the top candidate is not accurate.

One of the Republican leaders said, My gosh, I did not know the denominations of the candidates. That is not accurate. I personally talked to that leader on at least two occasions on the floor. I am just so hesitant to go and try to correct all the misstatements, because I think that opens up the issue again.

I want closure, like you. But here we have this Catholic priest, who just thought he would like to be the Chaplain. He thought he could do well for all of us in the House. And, since that time, he has been greatly maligned.

In Roll Call last week we read, Well, he does not have enough counseling experience. Well, he can weather that, because we all know as a colonel in the Army Reserves he counsels enlisted and officers every day he is on duty. As a faculty member, he counsels students and other faculty. He has counseled me and continues to do so. So it is not the idea of counseling.

But to go after this Catholic priest, who did nothing but want to be the Chaplain. There were rumors leaked, and I cannot point fingers because I do not know where they came from, that his home in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, was purchased with some Federal funds. Naturally, the reporters descend on the poor guy like locusts. Is that true? Is it true? Is that true? Actually, it was not true.

He absconded with some money from a drug and alcohol program, one which he has never run, and the reporters again called him and descended. Is it true?

It is not, because I never was involved in such a program. I never got any funding. So I know full well that throughout the process this individual and his reputation have suffered also.

So, today, Mr. Speaker, we close the book on this sad chapter. But I ask my Republican colleagues not to rewrite history, because that we should not do. But I think there are some in this body that owe Father Tim O'Brien an apology. As we go on from today, I think I can be confident that not only Father Tim O'Brien has been vindicated, but a lot of us, with the appointment of our new Chaplain.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.